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Mistissini Powwow...

Bus battle
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Murdered but not missed

by Will Nicholls

A renewed cry for a national inquiry into the missing and murdered Aboriginal women came after the discovery of 15-year-old Tina Fountaine's body in a bag beside Winnipeg's Red River. Unfazed, Prime Minister Stephen Harper again rejected the calls. Fontaine's murder, he said – and, by inference, the murders of hundreds of other Native women in recent years – should only be viewed as a crime and not a "sociological phenomenon."

It is often said people at the top grow out of touch with everyday life and common concerns. But it seems that there's more to it in Harper's case, an intentional refusal to acknowledge reality. The facts so compelling demand a different response from the way Harper is approaching the issue.

We know that: A) that Aboriginal women account for 16% of female homicides and 11.3% of missing women in Canada when they make up only 2.1% of the population; B) Aboriginal women are twice as likely to suffer domestic violence, more likely to be attacked by strangers, and three times more likely to become the target of violence than non-Aboriginal women; C) that 8% of Aboriginal teenage girls are parents compared to 1.3% of non-Aboriginal girls and twice as many are single parents; D) that household crowding, which is linked to increased family violence, is experienced by 31% of Inuit women and only 3% of non-Aboriginal females; E) that the Institute on Governance found "between 70% of sexually exploited youth and 50% of adult sex workers in Winnipeg are of Aboriginal descent," when Aboriginals only make up 10% of the city's population; and F) in 2013, nearly half of the 30,000 children in foster care in Canada under the age of 14 were Aboriginal.

Tina Fontaine was in foster care when she was killed.

It is extremely difficult to understand how these shocking statistics have no relation to the society that produced them. In other words, their sociological causes. Inquiries are not to solve specific crimes but to understand them in order to prevent others.

But prevention seems to hit the back burner where Aboriginal women are concerned. The RCMP won't disclose information about where they are most likely to be attacked. Explained RCMP Supt. Tyler Bates, Director of National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, said, "We certainly wouldn't want to cause offence to anyone residing or leadership within those communities."

Yet police will tell parents where their children may be in danger from predators without worrying about community response. Transparency doesn't seem to apply to Aboriginal women.

We need to understand why roughly 1300 Native women have disappeared from our communities and our families since the 1980s. To that number, we should add the girls in residential schools who never came home. We need to train police forces near First Nations communities on how to deal with what is happening. More aboriginal officers need to be recruited to those agencies.

But, in the end, we need a national inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women because without an effort to understand this tragedy we accept that their lives are worth less than those of other communities in Canada. In this day and age that is not acceptable. It requires a concrete call for action. Make waves with your elected Member of Parliament. You elected them to represent you so tell them how: by raising the heat on the government. The Conservative government should not get away with ignoring, much less camouflaging, a collective crime with, yes, sociological roots.

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Luke MacLeod talking with Head Dancer Gabriel Whiteduck

photo by:
Brendan Forward

Funny is as funny does

by Sonny Orr

I wonder where our sense of humour comes from? Why does it pop up when it does, sometimes inappropriately, but most times with exact timing for that last zing of a joke, bringing out peals of laughter and good times. It's not that joking around is something that can be taken seriously though. Jokes can backfire and sometimes the joker becomes the victim of his own jest.

If this seems confusing, well it is. I am trying to confuse everyone with this column, and I think I'm doing a good job of it. Often, I get asked if what I write is true, then I explain that the truth, if told properly, is ugly. That's why I tend to spice things up with some humour and a little bit of exaggeration, to put emphasis on the moral of the story.

For instance, once I was asked at a swanky hotel if I wrote the truth and I retorted that most of what I write is made up to protect the innocent (and the guilty) from ever showing their face in public. I was called an outright liar. I shot back that I prefer the term "good storyteller." The idiot got louder, and I just shook my head, wondering if that person had ever lied before – of course, he did, he's a politician. If there were any politicians who didn't lie, they wouldn't be elected in the first place.

Even though politics isn't considered to be a funny occupation, why are so many clowns running for office? In a way, when a politician says they are this and that, high up in the stratosphere, floating around with angels and good spirits, it's most likely that they aren't who they really say they are. That's why guys like Rob Ford or Arnold Schwarzenegger are the most honest politicians around.

Arnold stated that he, in his lifetime, consumed all kinds of drugs and did all kinds of party (kinky) things, so much so that it was a walk in the park to run for governor of California. He won the election by a landslide and the Terminator was in politics to clean out the rats and fix up the economy. If Arnold said that he was anything else than who he was, he would have lost the elections big time.

As for Rob Ford, he must have been in politics for quite some time, not a word about his election made it to the national news for more than a day. But when he started getting attention for his wild side, the spotlight became intense. Every person has their personal foibles, but how many politicians do you see hobnobbing with street vendors, bikers and dealers and admitting to their own human failings? Not too many.

For us, it seems that whenever a person runs for politics, their campaigns are so perfect in their promise to deliver that they seem almost magical. This is funny, because the world they promise doesn't exist in real life. If, however, a political wannabe were to come out and freely express that their social crutches won't get in the way of their electoral promises, then they got my vote. If someone were to say, for example, their platform was to improve communications amongst entities and then after being elected, was never heard from again, I'd find that pretty strange.

In a way, humour tends surface when we are stressed, underfed, overworked and underpaid. Under the gun of starvation, laughter is the only thing that works. That's why our people deal with the pressures of life with joking and laughter. Humour also has its place in politics because of the pressure and all the other weird stuff that comes with a political office. Just as long as they don't act like clowns all the time, then they would earn my respect like I have for Arnold and Rob.

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From the forests to the courts

A small Anishinabek community picks a legal fight against a lumber giant

by Nathan McDonnell

A small community of Anishinabek families in La Vérendrye wildlife reserve is fighting a David-and-Goliath court case against the huge forestry multinational Louisiana Pacific to stop continued deforestation on their territory.

The community launched a court case August 18 to end decades of large-scale clear cutting of their forests. Community representatives Tina Nottaway and Charles Ratt argue that their traditional way of life and the region's natural ecosystem are under threat.

The Anishinabek families live on unceded territory 300 km northwest of Montreal along Route 117 in the Laurentian Mountains. They are one of the few Canadian First Nations communities to remain on their original territories. Though their land is within the La Vérendrye wildlife reserve, this does not protect the forest from clear-cut logging.

In an email interview, Nottaway and Ratt stated, "It is our responsibility as Anicinabe people to ensure all creations of life are passed on to the next generations as they were passed on to us. But today we are faced with massive clear cutting, mining and flooding of the land."

Following increased logging activity in early August, the community organized a checkpoint on the road through the territory. By demanding permits that couldn't be provided, the checkpoint temporarily halted the operations of Louisiana Pacific with the help of Native and non-Native supporters, many arriving by bus expeditions.

photo by Shannon Chief

Day of Peace banner (August 2014)

Marie Dimanche, co-founder of Solidarité NABRO/Solidarity with ANORW, was ecstatic about the interest received in the bus trips from Montreal. "It's amazing all the support that the Anishinabe are getting from the non-Native citizens. It's beautiful. It's great. We filled a whole bus of people to get there, right in the middle of the summer, five hours from Montreal."

The bailiff arrived amidst the blockade, ordering the temporary suspension of logging and the beginning of the court hearings against Louisiana Pacific, which commenced August 18.

Dimanche says the Anishinabek have a good chance in court. "On the legal side, I feel we have a very strong case," she said. "The lawyer did a good job arguing the legal points and jurisprudence." However, on the question as to whether the community's voice would be heard, she keeps a guarded skepticism of the courts as "part of the economical and colonial systems."

This is echoed in the feelings of Nottaway and Ratt towards the court process. "We do not feel

our voices are heard in this type of system of law … [which does not] acknowledge that we have our own way of governing our people and territory. A system that is as old as the beginning of creations; a system that supersedes man-made laws."

On the other side, the forces against the community are not trivial. Based in Nashville, Tennessee, Louisiana Pacific had net sales of $2.1 billion in the year 2013 from their operations in the US, Canada, Chile and Brazil, according to their annual report.

The power asymmetry was clear in the courtroom. While the Anishinabek families had two lawyers from the Montreal-based law firm Martin Camirand Pelletier, Louisiana Pacific had a legal team of six lawyers at the hearing.

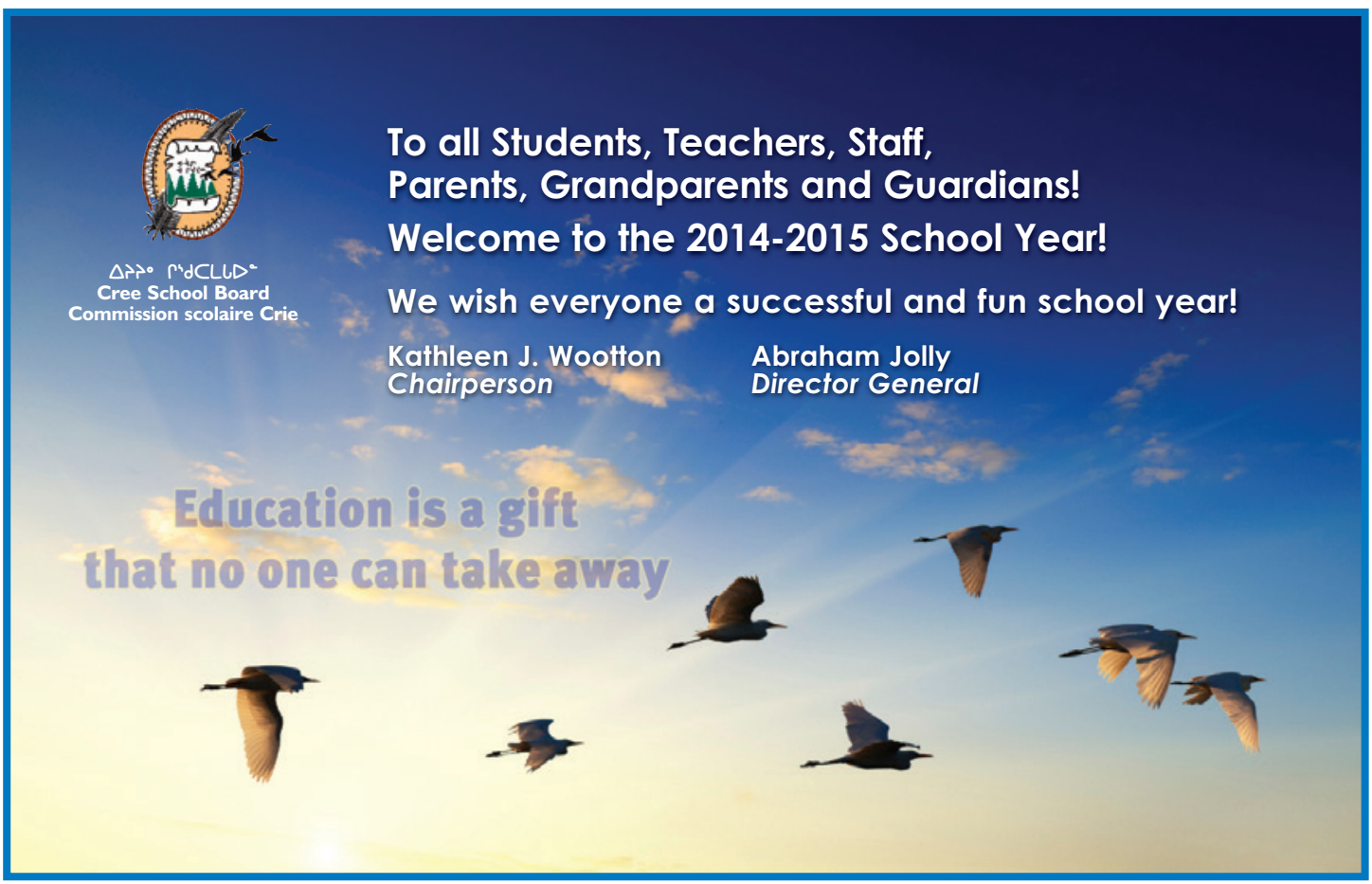
"What is frustrating is to see how these destructive and dishonest corporations, who are acting illegally, have so much weight, power and credibility in the eyes of the justice system," Dimanche lamented.

Nottaway and Ratt say the solidarity from non-Native supporters is important to help stand against such corporate power. "It is obvious that everybody's voice has a positive impact in reaching our goal," they wrote by email.

"It is important that we all stand together from all colours and all directions. We take great honour to all people who support Mother Earth and stand as one nation."

> "IT'S AMAZING ALL THE SUPPORT THAT THE ANISHINABE ARE GETTING FROM THE NON-NATIVE CITIZENS. IT'S BEAUTIFUL. IT'S GREAT."

Dimanche said this solidarity is also key to keeping the industry accountable. "It is going to help change things more quickly. Louisiana Pacific now know they cannot commit their deeds in secret, thinking that nobody knows and cares except a few Natives they do not care for."



Jenna Newton at her graduation from University of California Berkeley with a B.A. English in May 2013. Also pictured: her grandparents, Janie and Roderick Pachano, Joanne Newton.

Looking for resolution

Dealing with the contentious 10-year clause

by Joel Barde

Jenna Newton is difficult to peg down for an interview.

Aside from working up to 45 hours a week at three part-time jobs, she's a full-time student, completing her teaching certificate and master's in elementary education at San Francisco State University.

A member of the Cree Nation of Chisasibi who grew up in California, Newton says paying for school has been tough.

"I grew up with the expectation of funding from the Cree School Board," she said in a brief phone interview between a work shift and the start of a class. "It's put a huge financial strain on me."

Newton is hopeful a new resolution adopted during last month's Cree Nation AGA will bring relief. It endorses a broader, more inclusive interpretation of the "10-year clause," which governs who is granted beneficiary status under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JNBQA).

But the Cree School Board (CSB) says Newton shouldn't get her hopes up. CSB chairperson Kathleen Wooten explains that unless the JNBQA is amended, Cree post-secondary education funding will continue to be awarded "according to the status quo."

The AGA resolution would significantly increase the number of Crees who benefit from the JBNQA.

It holds that any Crees living outside of Cree territory who maintain ties to their communities and visit at least once every 10 years are entitled to benefits. Moreover, the Grand Council adopted an additional resolution saying that anyone under the age of 28 is exempted from the clause, meaning the majority of Crees seeking post-secondary funding would have access to it.

The resolutions were presented by Joanne Newton, Jenna's mother, who like her daughter has maintained close ties to Mistissini, a community where her parents still live. The two visit the community regularly.

Joanne Newton is heartened by the resolution and says it reflects the spirit of the JBNQA.

"The 'us' versus 'them' sentiment," she said, "does not reflect our traditional Cree values or our historical perspective."

According to Wooten, however, implementing the resolution would be disastrous for the CSB's Post-Secondary Student Services Program.

"If we interpret the 10-year clause that way, we will lose the program for sure. The government will simply say we are not honouring the agreement," Wooten said.

Wooten says the program was almost cut in the 1990s by the federal and Quebec governments because of a dramatic increase in the number of applications. She says both governments feel the program is overly generous and would seize any opportunity to cut it, leaving Crees

to seek post-secondary funding through Indian Affairs.

"The less the government pokes its nose into our business the better for us," Wooten argued.

Wooten is sympathetic to Jenna Newton's situation but says there is a simple solution for people in her situation: simply move back to their communities for a six-month period, thereby establishing residency and circumventing the 10-year clause.

Wooten says both the Grand Chief and Commerce Secretary informed her during the AGM that the resolution is simply a nonbinding recommendation.

Until the actual JBNQA is renegotiated, Wooten says the CSB will continue to award funding according to their interpretation of the 10-year clause

For Allan Jolly, acting chief of the Cree of MoCreebec, it's nothing new.

"It's one thing to pass resolutions," he said. "It's another for them to be carried out. We had a number of resolutions passed. But they were never followed through on."

Jolly should know. The MoCreebec have been asking the Cree Government for a more inclusive interpretation of the 10-year clause for over 30 years.

He says that the Grand Assembly passed similar resolutions every five or six years, but never followed through when it comes to negotiating an amendment with Ottawa and Quebec.

Until recently, the MoCreebec were engaged in a lawsuit against the Cree Nation to change the 10-year clause. That's been dropped in favour of workshops with the School Board and Grand Council.

Jolly is hopeful the MoCreebec will come to an agreement. But he says that renegotiating the 10-year clause is a complicated process, and in order for it go forward all communities need to be involved.

"Annual General Assembly resolutions can be good, but you need someone to walk it through all the way up to the top for any real action to be done. We need all the Cree communities to come together in dealing with the interpretation."

For Jenna Newton, trying to gain funding has been trying, exhausting experience. She is frustrated by her interactions with the CSB. "For me, it's been a very stressful ordeal. It's been a political run around; they never gave us a straight answer."

She would love to teach in Mistissini, but does not speak Cree. Her mother and grandparents, she says, were robbed of that ability by residential schools. But whatever happens, Newton said, she will maintain her ties to the community.

Mistissini Derby Results

Anglers from across the province were shoving off on Lake Mistissini August 22-24 for the community's 17th Annual Fishing Derby. The three-day event drew about 325 participants from the Cree Nation and elsewhere. The top prize, a brand new Kingfisher boat, went to Gino Rivard from Chapais. Rivard placed first in the Lake Trout category with a 7.16-pound catch, and finished second in the Speckled Trout thanks to a 4.09-pounder.

Here are the final standings from the Derby:

Walleye Category:
1st Place:
Stanley Mianscum 4.76lbs
2nd Place:
Jalen Coon-Come 4.57lbs
3rd Place:
Jimmy Paul Coon Come 4.04 lbs

Speckled Trout:
1st Place:
Leslie Mattawashish 4.11lbs
2nd Place:
Gino Rivard 4.09lbs
3rd Place: Ronnie
Trapper 3.94lbs

Lake Trout:
1st Place:
Gino Rivard 7.16 lbs
2nd Place:
Stephane Fortin 4.41 lbs
3rd Place:
Matthew Rabbitskin 4.00 lbs

Pike Category:
1st Place:
Gabriel Rabbitskin 17.49 lbs
2nd Place:
Trisha Gunner 16.06 lbs
3rd Place:
Elizabeth I. Blacksmith 13.30 lbs

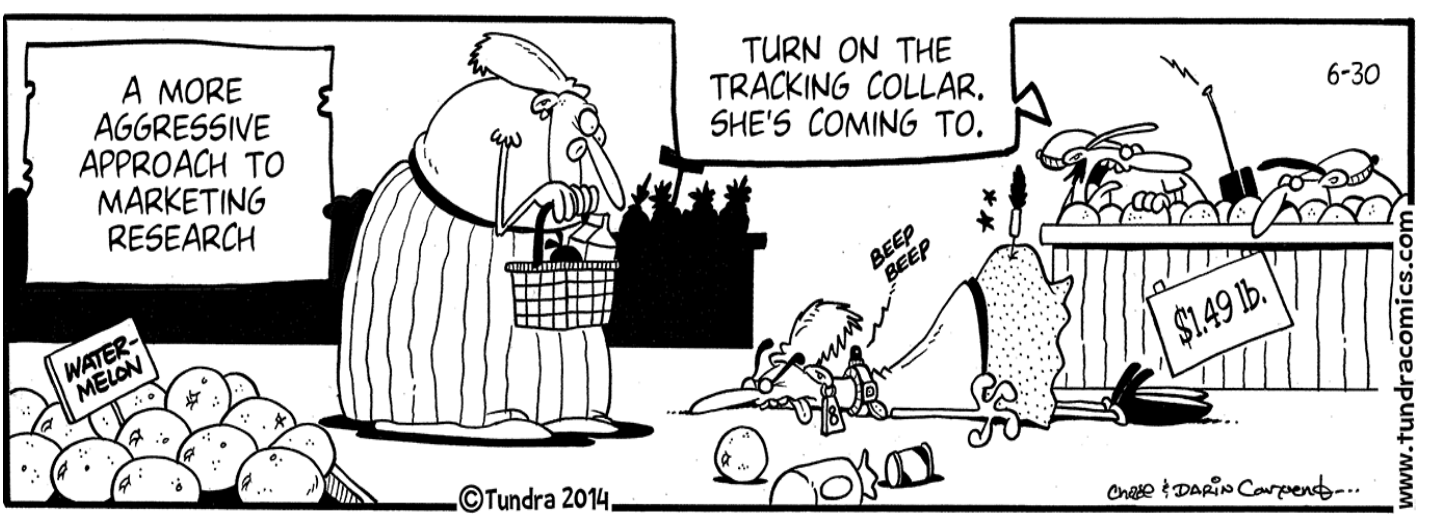
Combined weight of Gino Rivard's catch:
Pike: 8.03lbs
Lake Trout: 7.16 lbs
Speckled Trout: 4.09 lbs
Walleye: 1.68 lbs
Total weight 20.96 lbs

Stanley Mianscum, winner of the Walleye category.

Correction

The Nation would like make note of a correction to the article "Diamond dreams realized" on page 7 of Volume 21-20. The article claimed that Sidney Swallow partnered with Keith Kiskinshiish to create a janitorial and catering company. In reality Mr. Swallow partnered with Gestion ADC, a subsidiary of Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC). The company is called Kiskinchiish Camp Services. The full corrected version of the story can be found online at www.nationnews.ca/cree-companies-increase-presence-in-quebecs-first-diamond-mine

We regret the error.



Bus battle

School board's global bus contract to a new company sparks controversy

by Jesse Staniforth

The Cree School Board's (CSB) decision to award a school bus contract for students in all Cree communities to a single company that has never before operated in Eeyou Istchee is causing an explosion of anger and controversy.

The process by which Gingras-Shecapio, a new partnership between William Shecapio and Quebec City-based Gestion Alexandre Gingras Inc, won the contract is convoluted.

As CSB chairperson Kathleen Wooten explained during the Cree Annual General Assembly (AGA) in August, the student transport contract on offer covers five school years, ending in 2018-2019. Because the contract would be worth over $100,000, the CSB was required to make a public call for tenders. On March 6, the tender went up – both in the Cree communities, and through the Quebec government's electronic tender system (visible to companies across the province).

Though they received six bids, the CSB realized that they had not provided bidders enough detailed information. The CSB then refused all the bids that had been submitted and issued a second call for tenders April 23.

The second public call for tenders was open until May 14, roughly the period of Goose Break. According to one source that wished to remain anonymous, this forced at least one bidder to rush back from camp in order to send in their bid at the last minute. Others may have missed the chance entirely.

One bidder offered to cover transportation services in Chisasibi, Nemaska, Waskaganish and Wemindji. Gingras-Shecapio was the only company offering to provide services to all the communities – with the exception of Whapmagoostui – at the lowest price.

The prospect of a single large outside company putting local providers out of business sparked angry rumours, with some noting that Gingras-Shecapio Inc. was created only in July in response to the province-wide call for tenders, and claiming it was a "rent-an-Indian" company.

Though Mistissini's William Phillip Shecapio is registered as the company's vice-president, critics claim the corporation is a Trojan horse to sneak Gingras-Shecapio's parent company Le Groupe Swiftrans into Eeyou Istchee. Based in Quebec City, Le Groupe Swiftrans owns nine other bus lines in addition to Gingras Shecapio, including a guided tour line in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, an airport shuttle and charter line in Brampton, Ontario, and student transport lines all over Quebec.

To the CSB, however, Gingras-Shecapio's bid made good economic sense and would provide a standard of transportation best suited for Cree students.

"Throughout the process that led to the signing of the contract the overriding objective of the Cree School Board has always been to ensure that our Cree youth would be provided with efficient, reliable, safe school transportation services throughout all eight Cree communities concerned," Wooten told the AGA.

> "THAT'S WHEN I STOPPED MY BUS. IT WAS REALLY COLD, MINUS-40. I HAD TO EVACUATE MY BUS AND SEND THE KIDS OUT."

Wooten said there were problems in some communities from contractors that did not provide a sufficient fleet of vehicles. Others didn't have certificates of mechanical inspection of vehicles or failed to respect schedules.

Gingras-Shecapio, said Wooten, has long experience in school transportation and underbid all competitors by $200,000. The Gingras-Shecapio bid includes a commitment to provide 22 new vehicles, plus an additional eight buses to be used in emergencies.

In this case, size matters. The anonymous source that contacted the Nation emphasized that Cree

A group of Crees protesting the new Schoolboard bus contract at the AGA

companies are generally small and must rely on obtaining contracts before they can purchase new vehicles. The source suggested that the size of Le Groupe Swiftrans allowed them to make offers 100% Cree-owned companies would find hard to match.

But as the issue was debated at the AGA, a letter sent to the CSB and to the Cree Nation of Mistissini stirred the pot. The letter wholeheartedly endorsed the choice of Gingras-Shecapio and was signed by four drivers, a special-needs driver and three bus monitors – the entire driver/monitor staff of Mistissini's Transport Petawabano, which previously handled school transportation in that community.

The signatories said that previous contractors used old vehicles that were not properly maintained and faced frequent mechanical failures. They said they supported the choice Gingras-Shecapio for safety reasons.

Mistissini bus driver Kathy Coon Come, lead signatory of the letter, told the Nation that from the beginning of her time driving for Transport Petawabano her bus was plagued by exhaust fumes. She said she suffered headaches, dizziness and breathing difficulties as a result.

"Right from when I started working, I could see there was lots of things that needed fixing," Coon Come said. "A few months after I started, the bus smelled really bad of exhaust. Every time this happened, I would call or text [Tony Petawabano], but he would just tell me to put Prestone for the radiator to fill it up, because there was a fluid leak. I kept doing that, filling it up, and I told him the kids were complaining that the bus smelled bad."

The problem reached its peak on a midwinter day when black smoke began flowing out of the vents into the bus.

"At first, I thought a kid was playing with a lighter," she said. "Then one kid yelled, 'There's smoke coming from the vents!' I could see it. That's when I stopped my bus. It was really cold, minus-40. I had to evacuate my bus and send the kids out. The good thing was the people driving by lent a helping hand and took some kids home. I don't know if the parents really approved of that, but I didn't have a choice. I didn't want them to stand in the freezing cold."

When she returned the bus to the storage garage, Coon Come says that Petawabano sent a friend who was not a mechanic, and his

solution to the problem of the smoke was simply to fill up the leaking radiator again.

There were other issues: she said one bus had over 300,000 km on its odometer, and though CSB and provincial regulations require regular certificates of safety inspection be issued, Coon Come says she never saw that happen.

"The reason why I'm speaking out now is so the other communities will know," Coon Come said. "They're probably going through the same things as well. I've heard the buses were pretty old. What I want are safe children. I choose that ahead of promoting 100% Cree-owned business. I want kids' safety to come first."

Coon Come says she complained to CSB Equipment Services Superintendent Ronnie Blacksmith, particularly following the incident of having to evacuate her bus due to smoke fumes. However, when contacted for comment, Blacksmith said he had been asked by the Director General of the Cree Nation of Mistissini not to comment on the issue.

Likewise, Tony Petawabano would not comment respond to Coon Come's assertions until he has read the letter and consulted with his lawyer. However, he points out that Coon Come, under her maiden name Kathy Neeposh, was one of the seven competing bidders for the same contract that was ultimately awarded to Gingras-Shecapio. He said it's possible her statements may have been motivated by her personal investment in the competition.

In Mistissini, the issue has prompted pressure on the band council to adopt a resolution requiring contracts be given only to 100%-Cree-owned businesses. No one in the band council office was willing to comment on that issue or whether such a resolution had been tabled. Several calls to the Director General were not returned.

In Waswanipi, sisters Evelyne and Julie Cooper were sad to see the bid handed to Gingras-Shecapio. That decision effectively shut down their family company, Cooper Transportation, which was founded by their father in 1997.

"We have two buses, and now both buses are just sitting out there," said Evelyne Cooper. The new buses from Gingras-Shecapio have arrived in town, and the Coopers have encouraged their drivers and monitors to apply for jobs with the new company. Gingras-Shecapio took two drivers and one monitor out of the company's four employees – the only monitor not hired was Evelyne's son.

Meanwhile, the Coopers are stuck paying loans on two new vehicles.

"It doesn't take just five years to pay off a bus," said Evelyne. "A bus is expensive these days. We still have to figure out how to make payments because it was borrowed money from the Eeyou Economic Group. I'm pretty sure people in other communities have buses to pay for too."

Every company that bid on the contract was asked to name a base price per single bus with one driver, one monitor and all expenses related to operating the vehicle (such as fuel, insurance

"WE NEVER BECAME MILLIONAIRES OUT OF THESE CONTRACTS. BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT WE HIRED LOCALLY, AND THAT IT WAS A LOCAL BUSINESS THAT GOT THE CONTRACT."

and registration) and any measures required to operating in adverse weather. Gingras-Shecapio won the bid with a price of $104,500 per bus. Transport Petawabano was close, at $105,000 per bus.

Cooper Transport offered $115,132 per bus. But Julie Cooper says she can't imagine how Gingras-Shecapio could have bid as low as they did.

"I don't think they took a lot of things into consideration," she said. "I'm thinking they're not aware of the high fuel prices that are happening right now. Even the cost of the bus went up almost $10,000. That's why for us, the cost of the buses was a little bit high. We took that into consideration [in our tender]. Plus the cost of living also went up. For me, if [Gingras-Shecapio] bid that low, they won't survive long. It's not very profitable."

In her address to the AGA, Wooten said having to work with multiple transport companies was a challenge for the CSB.

Still, Julie says it stings to lose a business that paid back into the Cree Nation of Waswanipi, especially to one half-owned by non-Crees in Quebec City, and whose profits will in part be leaving the economy of the Cree Nation.

"My father barely had any education, but he was always a go-getter type of man," said Julie. "In this company, he wanted to be one of the businesses that created employment. He knew his numbers, and I know he was always thinking of other people. That was the mentality he had. He never thought about what he was going to get out of it, but he knew something would come to him because he liked giving."

But Julie Cooper said she only wanted to continue in her father's footsteps by creating jobs – one reason she encouraged her former employees to work for Gingras-Shecapio.

"We never became millionaires out of these contracts. But it was important that we hired locally, and that it was a local business that got the contract. When I think about how much of a loss it is that a business here would shut down because there was no work related to that field that they're in – it's sad. I've only ever been paid a small amount every week to take care of the company. This is what this company's about. It's not just about making money."

The Nation attempted to contact several other key people for this story. The email address listed on the Le Groupe Swiftrans site for William Shecapio was not functional, and his telephone number was likewise out of service. Messages left on Le Groupe Swiftrans' voice mail for Gingras-Shecapio's President and Secretary Alexandre Gingras had not been returned at press time.

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Coming to a classroom near you!

A preview of vocational courses to come from the CSB

by Amy German

Whether you are just finishing up high school and wondering what your next step should be, trying to plan out a lifelong career or trying to find a way to change career fields altogether, vocational courses can be the ticket to an entirely new life.

Selected and refocused by the Cree School Board, the vocational courses and programs made available in Eeyou Istchee follow provincial guidelines, but are offered in a homegrown setting. The programs target actual employment needs in Eeyou Istchee so that jobs will be available for graduates.

There are a wide variety of programs being offered for those trying to select a trade that will best suit them and result in a lifelong career. Whether it's working with your hands, with wood, explosives, operating machinery or repairing it, running a business or working in management, these programs are targeted to available skilled jobs.

Those more comfortable working in an office, assisting administration, maintaining local buildings, building new homes or as a landscaper will find programs relating to these fields.

For those whose passions relate more to working with the public in business, the hotel industry, childcare or building healthy communities there are also suitable programs.

The following is a list of programs that will be offered in each community and programs that are in development that do not as yet have start dates but will very soon.

Chisasibi
Starting a Business (TBA)
Carpentry, February 13, 2015

Whapmagoostui
Construction Business Management (TBA)

Wemindji
School Bus Driving (TBA)
Northern Heavy Equipment Operations, May 22, 2015
Drilling & Blasting, March 15, 2015
Heavy Equipment Mechanics, April 8, 2015
Machine Operations, Mineral and Metal Processing, April 9, 2015
Accounting, April 8, 2015
Starting a Business, April 8, 2015

Mistissini
Secretarial Studies, January 15, 2015

Nemaska
Northern Building Maintenance, March 12, 2015

Waskaganish
Northern Heavy Equipment Operations, May 22, 2015
Accounting, April 2, 2015
Landscaping, May 22, 2015
Carpentry (TBA)

Waswanipi's Sabtuan Regional Vocational Training Centre (SRVTC)
School Daycare Educator, October 15, 2014
Recreation Leadership, February 6, 2015
Truck Driving Class 1 (TBA)
Electricity (TBA)
Hotel Reception (TBA)
Surveying and Topography (TBA)

Matagami
Ore Extraction (TBA)

Starting a Business

If you have ever dreamed of being your own boss, doing your own books, having your own staff and creating your own start-up, this program is for you.

Covering the basics of how to make a business plan and how to manage projects, at only 330 hours, this course is geared at getting you on the right track to realizing your entrepreneurial dreams.

Carpentry

Carpentry is a versatile career that will offer decades of employment in building housing, infrastructure improvements and the projects created by the mining boom. This course will teach students about constructing, erecting, maintaining and repairing wood structures, wood substitutes and other materials.

Running at 1350 hours, it covers project management, how to read and produce drawings, specifications and sketches, learning how to build, install, insulate, set and finish every section of a building, building insulation, soundproofing and ventilation, working in a team, assessing client costs and necessary safety precautions.

Graduates will also learn how to work with: concrete forms, wood frames and steel bulkheads, projects that involve making joints, assembly work, erecting and repairing wood and metal parts, applying interior and exterior finishes and landscaping projects, available in various communities.

Construction Business Management

If you have already worked in the construction industry and feel as though your place is running your own business as a contractor, this is the perfect course.

Combining entrepreneurial and administrative learning with specifics about the construction industry, this course covers: project management, basic accounting skills, basic human resources skills, how to read drawings and specifications, creating a business development plan, managing health and safety regulations and how to follow Quebec's building code.

Northern Building Maintenance

2014 Cultural Gathering

Hosted by the Nishiiyuu Elders Council / Nishiiyuu Paataakusuun

Theme: Nishiyuu Nishditihimoon – Nishiyuu Values

September 9, 10, 11 & 12, 2014

Mistissini (Eeyou Istchee)

Workshops

- Family Values
- Cultural Values
- Historical Values
- Economic Values
- Judicial Values
- Educational Values
- Medicinal/Health Values

There will be various exhibits, demonstrations, story telling, and traditional food tasting Workshops will be conducted by the Elders themselves

For more information:
Stella M. Bearskin
819-855-6690
wabinjuksh@live.ca

Deadline to register: September 1, 2014

Everyone is encouraged to come and participate, gathering/workshops will be conducted in Cree (both inland and coastal dialects)

School Daycare Educator

Running at 450 hours, it also covers project costing, how to prepare proposals, negotiate contracts, plan outlines for worksites, material purchasing and managing the quality of the work.

School Bus Driving

Created in partnership with the CTF Charlbourg, this course is about learning the rules and regulations necessary to obtain a Class 2 driver's license and how to drive a bus. It includes information on provincial standards and requires students to fully comprehend the five sectors of the industry: urban transport, school transport, intercity transportation, chartered transportation and para-transit. This program runs a total of 330 hours.

Northern Heavy Equipment Operations

This course offers instruction in operating large machinery on a construction site, from diggers to bulldozers to steamrollers.

This 900-hour course teaches the basic principles of infrastructure construction, how to master the equipment operation, how to maintain equipment and to follow safety regulations.

Drilling and Blasting

This 900-hour course will teach students how to master equipment relating to this trade, learn the necessary safety precautions and how to understand the workings of a construction site.

Heavy Equipment Mechanics

Invaluable to the construction industry, this course will teach you how to maintain the heavy equipment the industry uses.

Students in this 1800-hour course will learn how to inspect, repair, maintain and adjust equipment, how to perform tests and solve problems as well as all about safety regulations specific to this field.

Also, this program covers maintenance for hydraulic clutches, ordinary and semi-automatic transmissions, hydraulic brakes, steering gear boxes, clutches of direction, the suspensions and the driving shafts of the tractors, heavy trucks and other machines on building sites as well as diesel engines.

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Trucking

The goal in this field is to seek out the cause of equipment breakdowns, fix them and prevent them.

Machine Operations, Mineral and Metal Processing

For those interested in working with machinery related to mineral and metal processing, this 900-hour course can lead to a versatile career as it covers how to use a wide variety of machinery.

This 900-hour course covers how to master and maintain equipment operation, to interpret information relating to ore processing and methods, to prepare control tests, to use related computer software as well as respect for safety regulations.

Accounting

Accounting can be a surprisingly creative field for those with a knack for it.

Those who are looking to improve their existing accounting skills or those who have never worked in the field often take this 1350-hour course.

The course covers how to master manual and digital accounting tasks, how to maintain and manage bookkeeping and bilingual communication.

Secretarial Studies

This 1485-hour course is for the person who loves to assist others in a professional working environment.

It will teach you to be efficient and effective in a workplace environment, to produce, update and proofread business texts, to use word processing, database and spreadsheet software, use telecommunication tools, offer basic understanding of labour laws and how they apply as well as bilingual text writing.

Landscaping

New to the Cree communities, this 1035-hour program teaches landscaping operations so that graduates can be employed by landscapers, municipalities, government departments and nurseries. Some also choose to open their own landscaping businesses.

Those in this program will learn the basics of pesticides, trade practices and safety, tool, equipment and machinery use, measurements and estimations, how to read plans, specifications and technical documentation, plant differentiation, workplace communication, mortared stone and concrete working, wooden structures and all sorts of other specifics relating to how to build, beautify and maintain landscapes.

A Resource Mine

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Northern Building Maintenance

To maintain a building in the north, this 1320-hour course teaches a wide variety of skills to ensure that a building is safe and running efficiently.

It will train students to repair and maintain equipment and plumbing and heating system, project management, to read and interpret building specifications, to work on internal and external building components, apply health and safety rules at construction sites and to work efficiently and effectively in a workplace environment.

School Daycare Educator

For individuals who love to work with young children, this 390-hour course focuses on how to organize, prepare and conduct a variety of activities within a daycare centre that are geared at early childhood learning and skill development, understand child development cycles and how to resolve problematic situations.

Recreation Leadership

Becoming a recreation leadership professional requires a great deal of skill for a northern climate.

Geared at teaching students how to organize group recreational activities in a northern setting, this course runs 1290 hours and is brand new to the Cree communities.

Truck Driving Class 1

For those that love the idea of a career on the road, this 615-hour course teaches students to plan a trip, drive on rural and highway roads in a truck, perform basic driving techniques, the basics of vehicle maintenance, fuel-efficient driving, time management, laws and regulations, how to load and unload trucks and how to resolve problems in the field.

Electricity

Running at 1800 hours, this course will teach would-be electricians how to install, repair, modify and maintain

Northern Building Maintenance

circuits, electrical and electronic systems, and communication networks, how to interpret drawings, specifications, technical manuals and maintenance procedures, and how to verify the voltage, current and power of electrical circuits.

Hotel Reception

Tourism is a growing industry in the north, and the need for professional staff is growing.

Running at 735 hours, this program teaches how to maintain guest register books, answer client enquiries regarding hotel services and use computerized or manual systems.

Surveying and Topography

Also new to the Cree communities, this program relates to a field with many opportunities.

This 1800-hour course will teach students how to master typical surveying instruments to gather topographic data, to specify and mathematically transform technical data, graphically portray surveys on a drafting table or computer, to stake out a lot and lay out a building and safety guidelines.

Ore Extraction

For those looking for a career at the heart of the mining industry, this program is all about geology and what to do with it.

Running 930 hours, this program teaches students how to master the equipment operation, basics of geology principles, the basics on explosives principles, equipment maintenance, to draw and read drill patterns and blasting patterns, to prepare blast rounds and development headings and related safety regulations.

For more info: www.csbsaes.ca/

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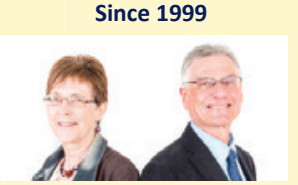

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A career of caring

Desiree Petawabano discusses why she became a nurse

by Amy German

Having just graduated from Queen's University with a degree in science and nursing this past spring at the age of 26, Mistissini's Desiree Petawabano's academic career is nowhere near over and she couldn't be happier.

Petawabano has already worked in the hospital in Chisasibi for two years. But she loves to challenge herself and so the plan is to keep up the academic work while working in the field in the south.

In 2010, at the age of 22, she graduated from Heritage College with a nursing DEC, and then went on to obtain her Quebec RN license in Fall 2011 and her Ontario RN license with the College of Nurses Ontario in Fall 2012. Now, she has just started studying for her Critical Care Certificate, which is a post-graduate course at Algonquin College.

"My short-term goal is to complete the critical care specialty certificate in Ottawa. My interest after completing this certificate is to apply to the critical care unit at the Ottawa Heart Institute or working in related acute care settings, such as a step-down unit, postanesthesia care unit (PACU), or an emergency department," said Petawabano.

Her long-term plan is to obtain a master's degree in nursing with primary health care (adults) or clinical specialist entry.

With this kind of training, Petawabano would be able to work as an administrator, a teacher or a researcher.

Nursing appealed to Petawabano because she has a keen interest in science, particularly microbiology, and felt she has the right personality for the field.

"I am really caring – and that goes well with nursing. I saw myself as a person working with people, having good interpersonal skills, such as communication and caring. I picked my career choice because I want to make a difference in people's lives and nursing allows me to do that," said Petawabano.

Petawabano's goal is to return home as a nurse. She credits support from the Cree School Board and her family for making this possible. Working at the Chisasibi hospital helped her realize the impact she could have.

"When I work with the elderly, I am always reminded of why I went into nursing. Because I can communicate with them in Cree, right away this lifts them up and you can start to see a smile on their faces. When I work with elderly people I feel like I am making a difference in their lives," said Petawabano.

"When I work with the elderly, I am always reminded of why I went into nursing. Because I can communicate with them in Cree, right away this lifts them up and you can start to see a smile on their faces."

While nursing is a very demanding profession with long hours, Petawabano says it's a field with opportunities to branch out into many different careers. At this point, with a bachelor's degree, she could actually teach nursing to college students.

"The message I would give to future nursing students is if you like to work with people, if you like to challenge yourself, and if you like to work in a stimulating, diverse and interactive environment, then nursing is a way to go," said Petawabano.

Written by Luke MacLeod, *Event Coordinator*
Photos by Brendan Forward

Niimuuhiikan 2014, our second powwow held in Mistissini on August 22-24, was a true success once again. The weather was great, making the whole event possible outdoors. Poplar Singers from North Bay were our host drum with Northern Voice from Wemotaci as co-host. Northern Medicine, Black Wolf, Moosetown and Stormcloud made up the other drum groups. We had 60-70 dancers at any time on the powwow grounds of Cree, Algonquin, Oneida, Manawan, Wemotaci, Masteuiatsh, led by our head dancers Gabriel Whiteduck and Paula Menarick. Our MC Kirby Mianscum did an incredible job as usual, as did our Arena Manager Dean.

The turnout by the public was fantastic; the powwow committee really appreciated that. We also had many new Mistissini powwow dancers this year, which tells us it's going to grow.

There are many people involved in the organizing of this event. Many took personal time to meet and then work for the three days we needed them. Volunteers are hard to find these days but we pulled it off.

Mistissini powwow grows under the sun

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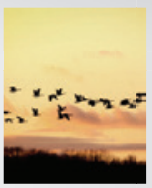
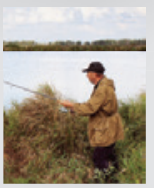
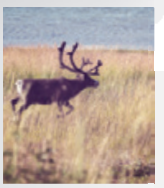

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DATE:	Tuesday, September 23, 2014
TIME:	7:00 p.m.
LOCATION:	Mistissini Sports Complex 208 Main Street, Mistissini

CAISSE POPULAIRE DESJARDINS DE WASWANIPI	
DATE:	Wednesday, September 24, 2014
TIME:	6:00 p.m.
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Many thanks to our committee members Alice, Pam, Scott, Sheena, Robyn, Georgina, Mary, Brendan, Priscilla, Betty Anne and those who came to help: Jim, Bjorn, Elder Thomas Coon and others – all your hard work really was worth it.

Next year we will look at planning with the Oujé-Bougoumou powwow, as many liked our powwows a week apart and got to stay to visit our communities for a while longer. Next year we want 10 drums and dancing for three days, so keep in touch with our website mist-powwow.com or Facebook mistissini powwow group. Lots of pictures have and will be posted. Thank you all and see you next year.

By the way, Mistissini was given an Eagle Staff by Redfern Mianscum and I was given the honour to keep it for our powwow family. Mii-kwetch Redfern!

HEAVY MONTRÉAL 2014

PEACE AND LOVE IN A MOB OF METAL-HEADS

by Lyle Stewart

Catharsis

NOUN

1. The process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions: *music is a means of catharsis for them*

– The Oxford Dictionary

Put 75,000 mostly young, largely male folks in a field on an island overlooking downtown Montreal during two sizzling summer days. Hire 60 heavy metal and punk acts to entertain them into the night under a full and brilliant "super moon." Add copious amounts of beer and tattoos, then overlay with a collective mood of marching happily to the apocalypse. Stir vigorously.

In its sixth edition, Heavy Montréal hit the long bomb, the Hail Mary touchdown pass of rock and roll. Headlined on Saturday by Metallica, metal's reigning kings, this year's festival broke attendance records during a bacchanalian celebration of volume and emotion.

Metal and punk are the musical genres of the gloriously damned, the alienated and the marginalized. It's a simple recipe of guitar, bass, drums and full-throated vocals (with the noted exception this year of Finland's Apocalyptica, a metal cello band). But this basic concoc-

James Hetfield of Metallica on his knees

tion provided a powerful and liberating brew for a few hours that feel like freedom.

I grew up a fan of metal, and later punk rock, after my older sister bequeathed me her Black Sabbath albums in the late 1970s. I squeezed my way up to the stage at a Sabbath concert in 1982 as a 17-year-old to watch Tony Iommi pick the devil's notes with his famously amputated fingertips. I head-banged to the Scorpions, got sick during Iron Maiden, punched the air for Motörhead and moshed in dozens of dingy clubs and underground punk venues.

More than 30 years later, it may have seemed foolhardy to brave tens of thousands of metalheads to reach the barrier in front of the stage at this year's Heavy Montréal August 9-10, but I succeeded.

Feel the rage

My festival started Saturday afternoon with Pennywise, a veteran California punk band that play a driving but melodic string of politically edged songs. The most familiar of those is their 2001 hit, "F*ck Authority," a song I've gleefully adopted as a personal anthem.

Thousands chanted along to what could have been a theme for the weekend: "Frustration, domination, feel the rage of a new generation!"

The hic to this lyric is that this music and its rebellion now spans a few generations. Pennywise were young when they started playing together more than 25 years ago. No longer. Most of the headliners at this year's festival and previous editions are, like myself, balding and greying.

When Quebec thrash-metal favourites Voivod took a short break from crunching eardrums, singer Denis "Snake" Bélanger took a deep breath, wiped the sweat from his wrinkled brow and announced that he was celebrating his 50th birthday. "And can you believe it? I'm still up here!"

My path to Metallica

By that time in the afternoon I had moved over to the Molson Canadian stage, where I knew Metallica would be playing hours later. This was strategic. I had edged up during the Three Days Grace set, got pushed closer to the barrier during the joyous moshing of Boston's Celt-

THOUSANDS CHANTED ALONG TO WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A THEME FOR THE WEEKEND: "FRUSTRATION, DOMINATION, FEEL THE RAGE OF A NEW GENERATION!"

punkers Dropkick Murphys, and then found myself only two guys behind the rusty grail for Anthrax's energetic set of classic metal.

Then, while The Offspring were slamming their Cali-punk hits on the neighbouring stage, the mood turned serious among the thousands waiting for Metallica.

There's a competition and brotherhood among the people in the pit at a big rock show. Some will get violent trying to get their way to the edge of the stage. Others form instant arm-lock alliances with perfect strangers so that both can maintain – or improve – their positions.

There is jostling, shoving, angry stares. There are also instant friendships, acts of caring and bravery, and a common understanding of the moment's danger and promise.

Then there's the sweat. Tightly packed bodies under a merciless sun leave one drenched in other people's body odour and yet at danger of dehydration.

The security guards in the stage moat took pity on people close by, squirting water into our open mouths like mama birds feeding their chicks. Those further out were sprayed with high-pressure fire hoses to help diminish the danger of heat exhaustion.

For many, it wasn't enough. Many crowd surfers were actually refugees seeking relief from the crush by escaping to the muscled and oft-heroic security dudes. As Metallica prepared to take the stage, the mob's sudden forward surge made breathing difficult. The fight for survival was on.

Enter Sandman

Metallica's trademark opening to Ennio Morricone's "Ecstasy of Gold," the stirring theme song to the spaghetti western *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, raised a million goosebumps of excitement before the band crunched into "Blackened" made the outside world disappear. By the time they launched "Nothing Else Matters," 13 of their biggest hits later, the song was undeniably true.

By then, I had won a place at the barrier through the process of attrition, as the fellow ahead of me gave up resisting the unrelenting press of humanity. For most of their performance – the only show Metallica will play in North America this year – I was right in front of James Hetfield's microphone, the best square foot of space on the planet at that moment.

But I had paid the price. Exhausted, parched with thirst and sporting a muddy footprint on my forehead from a crowd-surfing foot, I decided to give up as they finished the set with "Enter Sandman."

Lifted like a baby by pair of security guards, I was able to take a full breath for the first time in hours as I walked out on wobbly legs, drenched from head to toe.

A media pass has its advantages. Will Nicholls and I watched the encore set on huge screens set up in the VIP tent over a well-deserved beer, with the full moon and Montreal's skyline twinkling out over the Saint Lawrence. Drained but happy, the catharsis of an epic day and night gave way to a sense of peace. My aggressive instincts were fully sated even as the final chords of "Seek and Destroy" echoed across Parc Jean-Drapeau.

Heavy Mania

by Will Nicholls

We might all know professional wrestling is mostly faked but that doesn't stop us from enjoying the experience. The Romans understood the value of a spectacle and built the Colosseum to host their games. Usually, no one dies in today's games and matches but they still trigger something inside us and produce responses that may make us feel a little ashamed.

Heavy Mania – a side event at the Heavy Montréal music festival – was just like that. The villains and heroes made the crowds respond with cheers and jeers. Hearing a crowd chanting, "You fat f*ck," in unison was a moment that made me feel a little conflicted. Watching a woman go head to head with a much larger male opponent excited me. Everyone wanted her to win but when she lost it just made the winner more of the detestable villain the organizers intended him to play.

The wrestlers themselves are quite open about who they are and what they do. There are wrestlers like Eddie, or if the announcer could be believed, Sexy Eddie with five pounds of meat below the belt. The 15-year veteran leads the Brotherhood of the Hawk. As he told the Nation, "You don't f*ck around with the Mohawks!"

Eddie grew up a fan of wrestling. "I watched Hulk Hogan and I wanted those cheers," he said. Given little money many wrestlers make this is all they really get in the end. One time, someone grabbed Eddie's five pounds

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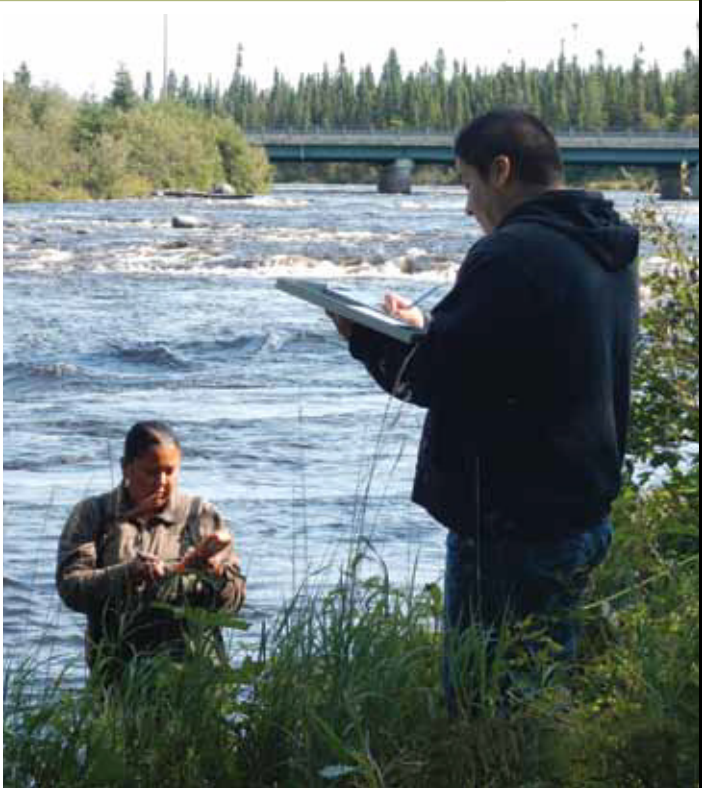

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of manhood, which he said is understandable because it's a big target. "Usually the target is on your back but mine is between my legs."

The ultimate winner of Heavy Mania threw this reporter under the bus. Mike "the Mouse" Auman told the Nation, "Strangely wrestling is a very homo-erotic thing." He said women liked that about the sport.

Another wrestler who went by the name Muti Brothers said he was the skinniest kid around when he was young and he saw the wrestlers as heroes. "As a skinny-assed kid I could lose myself in those super-heroes who were larger than life," said Muti Bros.

He said the white knight image is now unpopular in today's wrestling world. "Everybody has their dark side… there are no pure heroes," he said, adding the audience feeds on them and vice versa. He loves the interaction; "That's why I am here." In everyday life he is a polite and respectful person but wrestling lets him go beyond the restraints society demands.

Shayne Hawke, a five-time wrestling champion, said wrestling and heavy metal goes hand in hand and the Heavy Montréal event is a natural partnership. But the work to make it happen was hard. "But my people gave me their best and that what's makes this special," said Hawke.

For more information www.iwswrestling.com and follow on twitter @superstarhawke

From despair to determination

Photo exhibit of Native women portrays personal journeys to success

Written by Amy German
Photos by Monique Dykstra

A new exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts will celebrate the incredible turnaround success stories of 12 Aboriginal women who sought help at Montreal's Native Women's Shelter and were able to turn their lives around.

Opening September 13, *Inspirational Aboriginal Women* features stunning portraits of Aboriginal women who received care at the shelter and accompanying texts that relate heartbreaking stories and how they overcame distressing situations to become role models for their communities.

According to Native Women's Shelter Executive Director Nakuset, the project with Montreal photographer Monique Dykstra is intended to counter the

Andrea McDonald

Tealey Norr

negative portrayal of marginalized Aboriginal women.

The blown-up, full-body images portray contemporary and successful Native women in a way that contradicts widely held stereotypes. As an example, Nakuset points to Anishinaabe tattoo artist Andrea MacDonald, who is covered in tattoos and doesn't look Anishinaabe due to her mixed ancestry.

"Some of their stories are absolutely horrific – overcoming violence and rape, being on the streets and in total despair and how they found their inner strength to turn it around. Some of them are fighting to get their kids back too. They all come from different places, but they are all in society now," said Nakuset.

All of the participants in the project were clients of the shelter at some point in time either by staying at the shelter or receiving services through the shelter's outreach program.

While hundreds of women have been through the shelter à over the years, Nakuset said she selected these women with the aid of outreach worker Tealy Normandin because they felt that these women had amazing stories to tell.

Nakuset said Normandin is a perfect example. When Nakuset was an outreach worker 15 years ago, Normandin was her client.

Normandin tells her own story in the write-up that accompanies her portrait.

"Basically I was adopted at the age of three to a non-Native single mother and lavished with everything that a kid could ever want. I had a wonderful upbringing but at the age of 16 I discovered alcohol.

"I was a young mother myself; I had my first child by the age of 18 and had a complicated marriage in the sense that there was addiction involved on both of our parts.

"Eventually, to make a long story short, I sought out Nakuset and she helped me get back on track as she suggested a future plan for me with going back to school and what I had to do and where I had to go. The biggest part of that was reconnecting with my roots. So after I completed university my

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goal was to come and work at the shelter and give back to the organization that helped me. And, this is where I am."

According to Normandin, her participation in the project made it easier for other participants to tell their stories and be photographed. She said the hardest and most emotional part was to revisit their history. But the process gave these women the ability to look at themselves and realize what they have overcome.

"All of the women who come to me, each and every one of them is a beautiful woman with a lot to offer with so much to give and so much to receive. So making a selection was difficult but I had to be aware of who would be comfortable telling their story," said Normandin.

"Each of these women had something that stood out and that's what I found was amazing about their story. It turned out very well, but every story is very different and there is something powerful out there from each and every woman."

According to Nakuset, selecting participants wasn't easy.

"Some backed out because they didn't feel that they were worthy and some wound up sort of relapsing. It is a hard thing to be seen as a role model because if they don't have the self-esteem and feel that they are actually role models then it can become hard," said Nakuset.

Organizers were able to give these women a wonderful experience of getting their makeup done professionally, having their photographs taken in a studio and being interviewed. She said that part of this was to give these women a glamorous experience to celebrate their beauty and accomplishments.

Celebrating them publicly at the Museum of Fine Arts, where the exhibition will run for two months, gives the public the opportunity to understand what being an Aboriginal role model means.

"I think that there are so many levels, first it is physically what we look like, second it is where we come from, the fact that even though we have gone through hard times, that we are still strong and we want to be good role models for our children and the next generation and be seen in our communities in a good way," said Nakuset.

Once the exhibition ends, the photos will be permanently installed at the shelter. Nakuset hopes women arriving at the shelter in a state of difficulty will look at these photos and see the possibilities of the future.

"It will give hope to these women. They too can do this, as we want to do this project every two years. The participants are now going to be in the position to do public speaking, be recognized as role models and have a chance to talk to the media," said Nakuset.

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Each month, a new video will be added to Hydloandfriends.com. *To learn more, listen to the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS. Its hosts, Luke MacLeod and Luc Duquette, discuss the environmental follow-up activities related to the Eastmain-1-A/ Sarcelle/Rupert project, as well as the concerns of land users with regard to Hydro-Québec's facilities and activities.*

Next show:
Wednesday, September 17,
at 8:00 a.m.

By Amy German

Curbing an epidemic

Straight talk needed to break the cycle of increasing STI rates

The Cree Health Board reports that the rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea among Cree youth aged 15-25 are seven and 11 times higher than that of the general population in the province

According to Patrice Larivée, a Nurse Counselor on Sexual Health for the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB), these sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have reached epidemic proportions.

"We know that syphilis has also been on the increase throughout the province and that we have had a few cases within the territory last year and so we are now keeping an eye out for it," added Larivée.

As a result, when a patient tests positive for one STI, they are offered further screening for other infections.

Larivée said there are many reasons why the numbers in the communities are so much higher than the rest of Quebec. They include the fact that these diseases are hard to detect, the reluctance of youth to go to the clinic for check-ups and that many who do get treatment often get re-infected.

According to Larivée, the phenomena of re-infection usually occurs when a person has unprotected sex with their partner before they are treated or before the treatment has had time to fully cure the individual.

While those working at the clinic will tell the patients to come and get treated as soon as possible and to avoid sex for up to seven days after the treatment, this advice is often ignored.

Treatment and testing for both infections are quite simple. Chlamydia and gonorrhea require only a urine test at the clinic and treatment usually consists of one-time medication.

"It is just important that people understand that if they are told that they have been in contact with someone who just was just diagnosed with an STI, they should come to the clinic as soon as possible," said Larivée.

However, the reluctance of young adults to visit clinics unless they are very sick compounds the problem.

Both chlamydia and gonorrhea often don't produce symptoms and so people can have these infections and never know unless they are tested.

As a result, the CBHSSJB has been looking at different means to fight the growing STI epidemic. One suggestion of the new Youth Friendly Health Care Services Initiative is to offer testing to all people aged 15 to 25 twice a year. This eliminates the stigma since testing is offered to everyone. As well, treatment would be easier to access.

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"If not treated, these two STIs can lead to abnormal pregnancies in women and sterility in men and then there are more serious complications," said Larivée. "We encourage people to get tested as often as possible, at least once or twice a year if they have multiple sex partners."

The CBHSSJB is also informing youth how to best protect themselves. The best way to do that is through barrier protection, better known as condoms.

While condoms are readily available at various locations throughout the communities, there are still some issues when it comes to using them. Larivée said that not all boys, or teens in general, know how to properly use them. He said the condom must always be put on before any penetration occurs to prevent the transmission of an STI.

Availability can also be a problem. While condoms can be purchased discreetly at pharmacies throughout Quebec, this isn't the case in Cree communities.

"I am pushing to have condoms everywhere. In all of the washrooms of the clinics, at the youth centres in the washrooms, there should also be a machine in the washroom of the mall and the nurses' offices. They have to be easily available," said Larivée.

But this is sometimes met with resistance from some in the community who fear the impact of their availability on children.

According to Larivée, prevailing myths discourage teens from practicing safe sex, especially the belief that condoms diminish sexual sensation. He insisted there are ways to get around this and to understand it better.

"Young teenagers (boys) learn to masturbate quickly because the act of masturbation is shrouded with moral barriers, stigma and guilt. As a result of quick masturbation, when they put a condom on they feel that they lose a lot of sensation but that is because of what we refer to as the 'death-grip syndrome,' which is a way to increase sensation to their penises to reach climax faster," he explained.

"When I talk to teenagers I always tell them that they should try to slow down or reduce the pressure. I tell them to masturbate with a condom to get used to the sensation. This way they can practice putting it on and installing it properly."

Another myth is that one must be sexually promiscuous to be at risk. Not true: a STI can be transmitted during a person's first sexual encounter. As well, Larivée often sees youth who have serial monogamous relationships.

"Within six months an individual could have had three or four sexual partners and so if you haven't been tested between these partners, you can be just as much at risk as someone who has multiple sex partners and is not in a committed relationship," said Larivée.

"WITHIN SIX MONTHS AN INDIVIDUAL COULD HAVE HAD THREE OR FOUR SEXUAL PARTNERS AND SO IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TESTED BETWEEN THESE PARTNERS YOU CAN BE JUST AS MUCH AT RISK AS SOMEONE WHO HAS MULTIPLE SEX PARTNERS AND IS NOT IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP."

Other myths include the idea that STIs cannot be transmitted during oral sex. Larivée stressed that oral sex is still sex and carries risk and that condoms are still necessary even in these cases.

The bottom line is that anyone can get an STI from an infected partner. The only way to know whether someone is infected is to get tested and use protection if you are not in a committed long-term relationship.

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The magic bus ride

by Xavier Kataquapit

I took a road trip recently to southern Quebec to meet my mom in Trois-Rivières. The journey was a long, over two days from my remote cottage, but it was enjoyable to travel the rural roads of La Belle Province. My mom Susan, sister Jackie and many of the Elders of Attawapiskat were on a holy pilgrimage by bus to some of the Catholic shrines of Quebec. In a way, it was also a pilgrimage of my own.

I met mom at Cap-de-la-Madeleine, at the Basilica of Notre-Dame du Cap while she and the Elders were attending evening Mass. It had been a while since I spent time with my mom and the setting in this beautiful Catholic basilica was perfect in many ways. I grew up attending Sunday Mass with my mom, dad Marius and siblings. I even spent time as an altar boy. It was very nostalgic to be led by my brother Lawrence to find a seat next to my mom in a space she cherished.

This sanctuary was wide, bright and backed by a grand pipe organ that filled the back wall of a second-level mezzanine. I hugged my mom in joy and sadness as the pipe organist played dramatic, uplifting tunes. Then I pushed mom in her wheelchair in a queue of Elders as we walked with our candles in hand on a traditional Catholic vigil. It was magical to be in the dark on a trail that wound around a lake that surrounded a statue of the Virgin Mary. It was comforting to be around these wonderful Elders of my memories as we moved quietly and reflectively in the night.

This visit with mom was the first I had enjoyed since the passing of my dad so it was a joyful reunion but steeped also in sadness. Mom and dad have often taking this retreat over the years. Mom explained that people from the north had been coming here for generations and many of the Elders from Attawapiskat knew of this sanctuary because their parents and grandparents had been here.

While I visited with mom I took time to say hello to everyone from Attawapiskat and I am sure I could hear my dad's voice telling me not to forget this person or another. It was great to see Frances Hookimaw and her family. She is a familiar personality who has worked at our local hospital for years. I saw Joey Koostachin and Dominic Nakogee and their families. They are two old hunters, trappers and Elders from the community who I remember as positive people when I was living back home as a child.

Sophie Spence gave me a great hello and asked me to remember her in words and of course I just had to keep that little promise. She is a familiar matriarch in the community who worked hard to raise a good, strong family. Brother Michel Koostachin was also on hand to encourage the people on their pilgrimage.

I was happy to see Josephine Koostachin and her family, including her daughter Karen Koostachin. It was a little shocking for me to see Karen as she is the exact image of her mom as I remember her years ago in school. The Koostachins were our next-door neighbours in the community and whenever we needed help with anything, they were there for us.

I was surprised to see Edmond Mudd, a personality who is familiar to anyone who ever travelled to Attawapiskat. Edmund was a key employee at the local airport for many years, first for Austin Airways then later for Air Creebec. I also got to meet Annabella Iahtail, my old Cree teacher from grade school who taught me Eh-Ee-Oh-Ah and all the syllabics of our Cree alphabet. Her eyes sparkled with excitement as she made her way along the pilgrimage.

I saw my cousins Laurette Nakogee and Celine Koostachin. They love laughing and sharing fun stories of our lives. It was so good to see my aunt Theresa Kataquapit and her son Ron and his family. Theresa and her late husband Gabe had this gift for making people comfortable with their kindness and good humour. Her home was always open to my brothers and I in Timmins, where she lived with her sons while they were in high school. She was a sanctuary for us troubled teenagers in a non-Native world.

My visit was topped by a little reunion with Father Vezina, our parish priest in Attawapiskat for over 40 years. Our community has been very fortunate to have someone as devoted to lead our church. For decades he's been commemorating and celebrating births, weddings, first communions and graduations. Father Vezina has been our rock and has stood beside us from birth to death in many cases. Even though he is a French Canadian by birth, he speaks fluent Cree with our Elders and has in many ways also become an Elder in our community.

There were many other Elders and people on the tour who I did not have time to properly meet. It was a bittersweet moment for me as well because in meeting all these people and in being surrounded by so many familiar faces, voices and our Cree language, I almost felt as if people who are now gone, like my father, were with us in some way. That bus held a lot of memories for me with its very precious cargo.

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